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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 000356

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [XF](#) [AG](#)  
SUBJECT: FM MEDELICI WELCOMES MITCHELL VISIT, SHARES DOHA  
READOUT

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Classified By: Ambassador David D. Pearce; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Algerian Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci on April 7 welcomed Special Envoy George Mitchell's upcoming visit to Algiers and provided us with a brief read-out of the recent Doha summit. Medelci recalled that he had spoken by telephone with Mitchell and was looking forward to continuing the discussions in person. He expressed interest in more frequent contact with U.S. officials and felt Secretary Clinton had responded positively to the invitation to visit he extended at Sharm el-Sheikh. The FM welcomed President Obama's strong reaffirmation of the U.S. commitment to the peace process. "We need to give him time and see how the new Israeli government position evolves," he said. Medelci worried that, on the Israeli side, there was no longer a common approach to the peace process. On the Arab side, there had been some progress on reconciliation between Palestinians and among Arab countries, but more remained to be done. "Israel," he said, "needs the same thing, and this is the main problem." The overall situation was complicated and would require "a lot of work." The Ambassador said the Special Envoy was well aware of the complexities. He was coming to the region to explore how best to encourage the parties to take the necessary steps forward, and he planned to start that effort by consulting with our friends in North Africa. Medelci said Mitchell's visit to Algeria was a positive step. If a meeting with Bouteflika occurs, Mitchell will be the first senior U.S. government official to see the president after the April 9 elections, so the meeting will be seen both as a significant bilateral move as well as an affirmation of Algeria's weight in regional affairs. End Summary and Comment.

12. (C) The Ambassador called on Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci April 7 for a read-out on regional issues discussed in Doha and to brief Medelci on Special Envoy George Mitchell's upcoming visit to Algiers. Delivering a thank-you letter from the Secretary to Medelci, the Ambassador underscored the priority attention President Obama and Secretary Clinton had accorded the peace process, including with Mitchell's appointment. He recalled President Obama's strong commitment to a two-state solution and comprehensive peace.

13. (C) Medelci said he was pleased to have met with the Secretary at the March 2 donors conference in Sharm el-Sheikh. He noted that there were many opportunities for such meetings at multilateral events, but he hoped to see more bilateral meetings in the future and believed the Secretary had accepted in principle the offer he made in Sharm to visit Algeria. Medelci welcomed Special Envoy Mitchell's visit to Algeria and said that he had already had

a constructive conversation with Mitchell by phone. Medelci said he had discussed with Mitchell the need first to create conditions to allow both sides to talk. The problem of divisions within the Arab world was important as well, but he said this should not be exaggerated and efforts were underway to improve the situation. He observed that events in Gaza had angered Arab opinion, but they had also generated progress on bridging intra-Arab disputes.

#### REASON PREVAILS AT DOHA

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¶4. (C) Medelci said the peace process had been the primary focus at Doha. He recalled that Arab leaders thought the Annapolis Conference had "re-lit the flame" for peace negotiations. Many Arab countries had approached the conference with some reluctance, but were persuaded to participate based on inclusion of all Arab nations, respect for the Arab peace initiative, and the understanding that there would be a freeze on Israeli settlement activities. The Arab countries attended, and the Arab peace initiative remained, but unfortunately since Annapolis Israeli settlement activity had exploded. The sentiment in Doha, Medelci asserted, was that "We can't maintain a process with people who don't keep their word."

¶5. (C) Despite the skepticism and frustration of many Arab leaders, Medelci felt "sense prevailed" at Doha. He highlighted President Obama's message on the peace process and praised the President's recent comments, which Medelci said get back to the goals elaborated at Annapolis. "We need to give him time and see how the new Israeli government position evolves," he commented. Medelci believed that the biggest problem for the Israeli side was that there was no

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longer a common objective in approaching the peace process. The Ambassador noted that Palestinian reconciliation talks had also broken off and many issues remained unresolved. Medelci said he understood talks on Palestinian reconciliation would likely resume on April 10 in Cairo. He pointed to efforts to promote reconciliation both among Palestinians and Arab countries as a dynamic that was going in the right direction. "Israel," he said, "needs the same thing and this is the main problem."

¶6. (C) Medelci said that Mitchell's selection as Special Envoy was an excellent choice and he complimented the Obama Administration for having "the best intentions." He said the situation now was more complicated than it was at the time of Annapolis, and would require "a lot of work." The Ambassador said Mitchell understood the complexities of the region and intended to consult broadly to address the problem, starting on this trip with our friends in North Africa.

¶7. (C) Medelci said that Mitchell's visit to Algeria would be a positive step in that direction. The FM said he would be available on April 14 but was careful to avoid any direct reference to President Bouteflika (there are presidential elections here April 9 in which Bouteflika is widely expected to win a third term). However, he undertook to coordinate and maximize the value of meetings for Mitchell's visit. Medelci said he planned to travel to Tripoli on April 15 for an African Union Council of Ministers meeting and then again to Tripoli on April 20 for an Arab League Foreign Ministers meeting. On April 21, Medelci plans to attend a 5 5 ministerial level meeting in Cordoba.

#### PA SALARIES

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¶8. (C) Asked by the Ambassador about the status of the Algerian contributions to the Palestinian Authority (PA), Medelci was explicit that, as a result of the appeals made to him by Senator Mitchell and U/S Burns, Algeria had accelerated the payment of 50 percent of its annual

contribution to the PA made through the Arab League. That payment (of \$26.4 million) was made, he said flatly, to the Arab League in February. "It's gone." Medelci also noted Algeria's \$200 million pledge for Gaza reconstruction. Algeria, he said, was waiting for a formal program from the Palestinians giving details on how the funds would be spent, and hoped to receive the program documents by the end of April.

COMMENT

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19. (C) Medelci was obviously looking forward to engaging with Special Envoy Mitchell on next steps in the peace process. We would also expect President Bouteflika (if elected) to meet Mitchell, even though Medelci was careful not to flag that. Bouteflika engaged directly and at length with Secretary Rice when she was here last fall, and also received UN Special Envoy Chris Ross when he visited recently. Mitchell would be the first senior U.S. government official to see the president after the elections, so the meeting will be seen both as a significant bilateral move as well as an affirmation of Algeria's weight in regional affairs.  
PEARCE